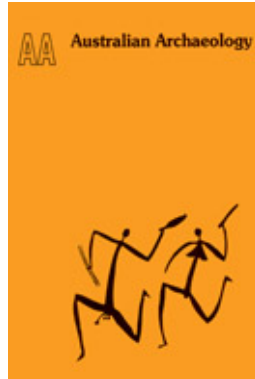


## Australian Archaeology



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## THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The A.A.A. was formed at a meeting of archaeologists in Perth during the ANZAAS meeting of August 1973. The idea of such an association had been mooted for several years, as it had in several other disciplines which also formed associations at this time. The A.A.A. is noticeably different from the other associations in that while they are confined to "professionals", the A.A.A. is open to anyone who has a genuine desire to further archaeology, be he employed as an archaeologist, just interested, or professionally employed in a related discipline. Exactly how the Association will function, and the details of its constitution have yet to be decided, but it seems to me that there are a number of areas in which such an association can be of considerable use to archaeologists and their associates, and I hope to see the Association active in the following spheres at least.

### 1. Communications

A major problem facing archaeologists in Australia is isolation, and I believe that better means of communications could help relieve this. Although there are developing departments of archaeology in New South Wales and the A.C.T., in all other states, archaeologists work in departments which are not primarily oriented towards archaeology. Such people are often under pressures to deviate into other fields which may be closer to the major orientation of the employing institution, and they lack professional colleagues to turn to for advice. If the A.A.A. can help to strengthen their positions by reminding them that there is a body of archaeologists who have the same priorities and are interested in the achievements of the individual, the association will play a valuable role. I envisage this as being achieved mainly through the newsletter.

### 2. Public Relations

We all publicise the work and achievements in archaeology in Australia, but one still meets the comment, "I don't suppose there is any archaeology in Australia!" A public awareness of archaeology is absolutely essential, for it is the general public who report sites to us, who often make considerable sacrifices to enable archaeologists to excavate, who voluntarily preserve sites which we believe are important, and in the long run, it is the general public which supports the museums and universities which employ the bulk of the archaeologists in Australia. The contribution made by individuals to the public appreciation of our aims and needs is of fundamental importance, but there are times when the individual cannot achieve as much as he would like in this field, and I believe that the A.A.A. should attempt to supplement the individual efforts. The newsletter should be a start, but more public lectures would be desirable, and it is hoped that the A.A.A. will be able to organise these in the future.

Each branch of archaeology will have its own particular set of priorities in public relations. For example, in the field of marine archaeology, there is urgent need for legislation to stop the looting of the nineteenth century wrecks around the Australian coast; this legislation will only come if there is sufficient public pressure and an awareness by politicians of the value of the material which is being taken from these wrecks. Prehistorians face a different situation in which Aborigines in many areas are asking why archaeologists should dig up the remains of their past; it is I think fair to say that when Aborigines fight for the recognition of such rights as land ownership, they cite the findings of the archaeologists which give a perspective to Aboriginal occupation of Australia, so that in fact there are very good reasons why Aborigines and archaeologists should work side by side for mutual advantage. But the days when the archaeologists could assume that Aborigines approved of, or at least would not object to, excavations have gone, and it is hoped that the A.A.A. will play a role in liason between archaeologists and Aborigines.

### 3. Archaeology and the Law

In all states in Australia, there is legislation which is intended to protect archaeological sites from unnecessary damage: although there are defects in these acts, they are saving sites which would otherwise be lost, as so many have in the past. The passing of these acts was encouraged by archaeologists, and by and large, they serve the archaeologists well. There have, however, been a number of cases in which archaeologists have felt penalised or restricted by the workings of these acts. It would, of course, be a perfect world if there were no misunderstandings or injustices, but it is hoped that the A.A.A. can help to smooth the way for a better understanding between the archaeologists on the one hand and those who have the task of implementing the acts on the other. The resolution of this kind of situation would appear to lie in continuing discussions, and these the A.A.A. can support.

### 4. Relations with other disciplines

As indicated in the opening paragraph, the decision has already been made that the A.A.A. will not be closed to members of other professions, and will not be a narrow "professional" society. This decision reflects the very nature of archaeology which relies so heavily on the physical sciences for its techniques, and on the humanities for its interpretation of its data. It is hoped that the newsletter can help to draw the attention of members of other disciplines to the areas in which they can liase with archaeologists.

Ian Crawford - President

December 1974